

**PR 16-88, “The Director of the Department of Housing and
Community Development Jalal Greene Confirmation
Resolution of 2005”**

Before

**The Committee on Economic Development
The Honorable Sharon Ambrose, Chairman
Council of the District of Columbia**



**Testimony of Jalal Greene
Acting Director**

Department of Housing and Community Development

Monday, March 21, 2005

INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon, Chairman Ambrose and the distinguished members of the Committee on Economic Development. My name is Jalal Greene and I am the Acting Director of the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD or the Department).

First, I would like to thank Mayor Williams for demonstrating confidence in my management skills as well as my vision for economic development and affordable housing opportunities by nominating me to this pivotal post.

Second, I would like to thank you, the Committee and the Council of the District of Columbia, for considering my nomination.

Chairman Ambrose, I am invested in and care deeply about the future of our nation's capital and its residents. Moreover, I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to provide effective leadership to an agency that plays such a critical role in neighborhood revitalization and the development and preservation of affordable housing.

Briefly, I would like to outline my presentation today. First, I will discuss my background and qualifications for this position; second, the challenges this post must address and proposed solutions to those challenges; finally, my vision and direction for the agency.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE POST

For the record, I am a District resident and over the course of my 25 year career have served this city and other jurisdictions in a number of positions.

I hold a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics from the City College of New York, a Master of Arts degree in City and Regional Planning from the Pratt Institute in New York, as well as a Masters degree in Business Administration from Pace University in New York.

Chairman Ambrose, I have held positions in this government and region in a number of capacities that have prepared me to lead the D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). I would like to provide an overview of some of those positions.

I have significant experience with the District of Columbia Government.

- A. First, I served as Director of Operations for the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development where I worked on numerous high profile projects;
- B. Second, I was the chief financial officer overseeing the new Washington Convention Center Authority;
- C. Third, I served as Interim Executive Director of the Lottery and Charitable Games Board; and
- D. Fourth, I served as the Deputy Chief Financial Officer for the Office of Budget and Planning and was the principal financial advisor on the District's gross budget and helped produce the

District's first balanced budget, while working with the Control Board.

In other regions, I:

A. Served as Director of the Prince George's County Department of Housing and Community Development and Executive Director of the Redevelopment and Housing Authorities.

Under my leadership, I:

1. Modernized and energized two under-performing agencies;
2. Received two "Best Practices" awards from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development;
3. Issued more than \$120 million single and multi-family mortgage revenue bonds;
4. Initiated the creation of an Arts and Entertainment District that included 77-units of very low-income artist "live-work" housing;
5. Received a \$10 million allocation to implement a New Market Tax Credit Program; and
6. Created approximately 1,000 new and redeveloped affordable housing units.

In addition, I:

B. Developed and monitored budgets in my role as Management Analyst for the city of Albuquerque, New Mexico;

- C. Managed more than 150 transactions in excess of \$35 billion as a senior public finance banker and financial advisor to state and local governments; and finally,
- D. Served as a community planner and advocate for numerous community organizations in New York City.

I believe my background has made a positive difference in the development of this city and other communities in which I served. Today, I am seeking confirmation as the Director of the Department of Housing and Community Development because I possess a unique skill set with knowledge and experience in finance, housing, economic and community development, management, community planning and advocacy that can help confront the challenges facing our city.

CHALLENGES

As Acting Director of the Department of Housing and Community Development, I have focused my energies on thoroughly assessing where the agency is today, taking note of successes that have been achieved and I am alarmed by the affordable housing challenges that face both our city and the Department. With the commitment of a dedicated staff and in collaboration with the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED), I am strategically examining solutions to the following:

1. The ongoing effects of diminishing housing stock available to low and moderate-income households;
2. The lagging homeownership rate that is below that of neighboring jurisdictions;

3. The many neighborhoods that have not yet benefited from the dramatic level of investment, like in the downtown area;
4. An environment of diminishing federal resources that threatens the production and preservation of affordable housing and community development initiatives; and finally,
5. The threat of high levels of childhood lead-poisoning resulting from residential lead-based paint.

SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGES

There is no doubt, that our city and the Department face tough housing challenges. However, I am confident that we can continue to raise the level of performance by this agency to address these challenges through the implementation of several initiatives that I will now outline. For Fiscal Year 2005, I plan to:

1. Establish an *Affordable Housing Acquisition Fund* for non-profit housing developers;
2. Implement the *American Dream Downpayment Initiative (ADDI)* to provide additional assistance of as much as \$10,000 to first-time homebuyer applicants in the Department's Home Purchase Assistance Program (HPAP). This will increase the maximum amount available for low-income homebuyers to \$40,000;
3. Continue to focus our redevelopment and neighborhood revitalization activities strategically, by revitalizing areas such as Bellevue, Danbury, Camp Simms and others;

4. Spend Housing Production Trust Fund monies and process requests efficiently, by closing approximately 21 transactions totaling \$42,235,228 within the next 90-120 days; and finally,
5. Spend lead safe funds aggressively while coordinating with other District agencies in addressing lead issues.

DIRECTION AND VISION FOR THE DEPARTMENT

As you are aware, Chairman Ambrose, the District is experiencing a period of unprecedented housing and economic growth. While this may be good news for the city as a whole, its impact has not benefited all residents equally. Should I be confirmed, my objective will be to implement housing and economic development strategies that support this administration and the Council's collective mission to "level the playing field" so that residents on the lower end of the economic scale can find affordable housing and can achieve the dream of homeownership. This can be accomplished by executing strategies that: (a) seek to support the preservation of existing affordable housing; (b) provide gap financing to support new developments that include affordable units; and (c) revitalize our residential communities and the commercial corridors impacting neighborhoods with affordable housing.

In the coming months, my vision will be to:

1. Increase the production of Affordable Housing for low- and very low-income families in addressing substandard existing housing and replacing it with better quality housing;

2. Work in concert with the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development to develop a strategy and implementation plan to revitalize our neighborhood commercial corridors;
3. Manage the Housing Production Trust Fund (HPTF) to increase the fund's production and effectiveness;
4. Work diligently to increase home ownership rates;
5. Catalyze our community outreach efforts to formulate mutually agreed upon strategies;
6. Provide innovative training opportunities for the community that will inform and educate residents about the work of our Department and ease of access to the resources that we provide;
7. Work with the Mayor's Comprehensive Housing Strategy Task Force, along with the Housing and Community Development Reform Advisory Commission, to formulate recommendations that will facilitate the Department's mission; and finally,
8. Become a model agency collectively working with our stakeholders, particularly our Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs) and Non-Profit Developers, to strengthen and revitalize our neighborhoods to provide quality affordable housing and upgrade our commercial corridors that impact those neighborhoods.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, my vision is guided by the principles included in the Department's mission: To be a catalyst in neighborhood revitalization by strategically leveraging public funds with private and non-profit partners to

preserve, rehabilitate and promote the development of housing, increase home ownership, and support community and commercial initiatives that benefit low-to-moderate income residents. As a public servant, I believe it is my obligation to build upon the principles that are representative of this great city -- its cultural, racial and economic diversity. The development of affordable housing opportunities will help ensure that we build a capital city that continues this rich tradition and becomes one that is emulated throughout the country.

To achieve this, the Department must become a benchmark institution. This requires that we build and maintain great neighborhoods in every ward of this city. This can be accomplished by working collaboratively with other District agencies; such as the Housing Finance Agency (HFA), the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) and the DC Housing Authority (DCHA), as well as this Council and our community partners.

I am seeking confirmation as the Director of the Department of Housing and Community Development because I believe in the benefits of affordable housing and community development and care about the people I serve. My skills and experience in finance, housing, economic and community development, management, community planning and advocacy match the kind of leadership required for this Department. Further, I am convinced that the work of the Department of Housing and Community Development is critical to addressing the affordable housing crisis and improving the lives of those most in need. I know this from two perspectives, 1) from that of

having had the responsibility of carrying out this mission and, 2) having grown up in and worked in low-income, working class communities. I know how important this work is. In order to be a great city, we must have great neighborhoods throughout the District of Columbia. As public servants, like me and others, we have the talent, the determination and the dedication to achieve the heights that are expected of us. I respectfully request your approval to be one of those to lead this charge.

Chairman Ambrose and Councilmembers, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to sit before you today, to present testimony in support of my nomination to lead the D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development. This concludes my remarks. My staff and I would be pleased to answer any questions you and the Committee may have.